



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
REGION IX
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AUG 19 2013

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California Department of Transportation, District 8
464 W. 4th Street, 6th Floor MS820
San Bernardino, California 92401-1400

Subject: Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the State Route 58 Kramer Junction Expressway Project, San Bernardino County, California (CEQ# 20130193).

Dear Mr. Bricker:

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has reviewed the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the proposed SR-58 Kramer Junction Expressway Project. Our review and comments are provided pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the Council on Environmental Quality Regulations (40 CFR Parts 1500-1508), and our NEPA review authority under Section 309 of the Clean Air Act.

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), as NEPA lead agency, is proposing to realign and widen State Route 58 (SR-58) from a two-lane conventional highway to a four-lane expressway near the unincorporated community of Kramer Junction. Caltrans further proposes constructing a railroad grade separation and an expressway interchange at Kramer Junction. The total length of the project is 13.3 miles, from 0.4 miles west of the Kern County/San Bernardino County line to a point 7.5 miles west of United States Route 395. The DEIS evaluates four proposed alternatives, as well as a No Build Alternative. No preferred alternative has been identified.

EPA commends Caltrans for their efforts to reduce impacts to biological resources near Kramer Junction to the greatest extent possible. We are particularly encouraged to see the inclusion of mitigation measures BIO-39 and BIO-41 in the DEIS, providing a commitment to further minimize the impact to the desert tortoise and Mohave Ground Squirrel with compensatory mitigation.

Following our review of the DEIS, EPA has rated the proposed project as Lack of Objections (LO) (see enclosed *Summary of EPA Rating Definitions*). While the DEIS identifies that project implementation, combined with proper mitigation, should not result in significant environmental impacts, we offer the following recommendations for your consideration in preparing the FEIS.

Impacts to Boron

Boron is an unincorporated area of 2,253 residents on the edge of the proposed project, connected to Kramer Junction by SR-58, and is in the same community cohesion analysis. Boron has two schools near SR-58 (470 feet for West Boron Elementary, 1100 feet for Boron High School) that would also be exposed to increased particulate matter emissions (+29% by 2019 and +124% by 2039) from daily truck traffic forecast for Kramer Junction. EPA

also notes that Alternative 2 presents significant adverse impacts to community cohesion that cannot be fully mitigated. EPA recommends Caltrans consider protecting likely sensitive receptors in Boron with effective filtration of the heating, ventilation, and air conditioning systems at Boron's schools to mitigate for expected air quality impacts, and to commit to implementing that mitigation in the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS). We also note that at least six years have passed since Caltrans held project scoping meetings, and that these meetings generated numerous useful comments from interested residents and businesses in Kramer Junction and Boron. Because of this, we recommend that Caltrans renew community engagement and document any additional mitigations these meetings identify for the preferred alternative in the FEIS.

Hazardous Waste/Materials Evaluation

Site evaluation in the proposed project area noted structures built before 1979, and identified numerous sites with possible asbestos, lead paint, and polychlorinated biphenyl (PCB) contamination concern. EPA has discovered new sources of PCB contamination in the form of caulk widely sold before the chemical's ban, and has developed evaluation and cleanup tools to assist in site evaluation. We recommend Caltrans use the EPA information on PCBs in Caulk (<http://www.epa.gov/pcbsincaulk/>) with follow up site evaluation in structures built before 1979, and to document any additional PCB discoveries in the FEIS.

We appreciate the opportunity to review the DEIS. When the FEIS is available for review, please send one copy to the address above (mail code: CED-2). If you have any questions, please contact Zac Appleton, the lead reviewer for this project. Zac can be reached at 415-972-3321 or appleton.zac@epa.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Connell Dunning", followed by the word "for" in a smaller, less legible script.

Connell Dunning, Transportation Team Supervisor
Environmental Review Office
Communities and Ecosystems Division

Enclosures: Summary of EPA Rating Definitions

cc: David Bricker, Caltrans District 8
Chris Newman, FHWA
Tay Dam, FHWA

SUMMARY OF EPA RATING DEFINITIONS*

This rating system was developed as a means to summarize the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) level of concern with a proposed action. The ratings are a combination of alphabetical categories for evaluation of the environmental impacts of the proposal and numerical categories for evaluation of the adequacy of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT OF THE ACTION

"LO" (Lack of Objections)

The EPA review has not identified any potential environmental impacts requiring substantive changes to the proposal. The review may have disclosed opportunities for application of mitigation measures that could be accomplished with no more than minor changes to the proposal.

"EC" (Environmental Concerns)

The EPA review has identified environmental impacts that should be avoided in order to fully protect the environment. Corrective measures may require changes to the preferred alternative or application of mitigation measures that can reduce the environmental impact. EPA would like to work with the lead agency to reduce these impacts.

"EO" (Environmental Objections)

The EPA review has identified significant environmental impacts that should be avoided in order to provide adequate protection for the environment. Corrective measures may require substantial changes to the preferred alternative or consideration of some other project alternative (including the no action alternative or a new alternative). EPA intends to work with the lead agency to reduce these impacts.

"EU" (Environmentally Unsatisfactory)

The EPA review has identified adverse environmental impacts that are of sufficient magnitude that they are unsatisfactory from the standpoint of public health or welfare or environmental quality. EPA intends to work with the lead agency to reduce these impacts. If the potentially unsatisfactory impacts are not corrected at the final EIS stage, this proposal will be recommended for referral to the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ).

ADEQUACY OF THE IMPACT STATEMENT

Category "1" (Adequate)

EPA believes the draft EIS adequately sets forth the environmental impact(s) of the preferred alternative and those of the alternatives reasonably available to the project or action. No further analysis or data collection is necessary, but the reviewer may suggest the addition of clarifying language or information.

Category "2" (Insufficient Information)

The draft EIS does not contain sufficient information for EPA to fully assess environmental impacts that should be avoided in order to fully protect the environment, or the EPA reviewer has identified new reasonably available alternatives that are within the spectrum of alternatives analyzed in the draft EIS, which could reduce the environmental impacts of the action. The identified additional information, data, analyses, or discussion should be included in the final EIS.

Category "3" (Inadequate)

EPA does not believe that the draft EIS adequately assesses potentially significant environmental impacts of the action, or the EPA reviewer has identified new, reasonably available alternatives that are outside of the spectrum of alternatives analyzed in the draft EIS, which should be analyzed in order to reduce the potentially significant environmental impacts. EPA believes that the identified additional information, data, analyses, or discussions are of such a magnitude that they should have full public review at a draft stage. EPA does not believe that the draft EIS is adequate for the purposes of the NEPA and/or Section 309 review, and thus should be formally revised and made available for public comment in a supplemental or revised draft EIS. On the basis of the potential significant impacts involved, this proposal could be a candidate for referral to the CEQ.

*From EPA Manual 1640, Policy and Procedures for the Review of Federal Actions Impacting the Environment.

